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TOP KENTUCKY DERBY, OAKS CONTENDERS EPICENTER, ECHO ZULU RETURN TO WORK TAB AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Sunday, April 10, 2022) – With less than four weeks remaining until the \$3 million Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) and \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI), Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen's** duo of top contenders **Epicenter** and **Echo Zulu** returned to the work tab at Churchill Downs for the first time since their respective victories two weeks ago in the Louisiana Derby (GII) and Fair Grounds Oaks (GII).

Winchell Thoroughbreds' Epicenter, the likely favorite in the Kentucky Derby, worked five furlongs in 1:01 Sunday at 5:50 a.m. (all times Eastern) while his stablemate, **L and N Racing** and Winchell Thoroughbreds' champion filly **Echo Zulu** breezed 20 minutes prior to Epicenter and completed five furlongs in 1:00.80.

Epicenter, with exercise rider **Wilson Fabian** up, worked outside of fellow 3-year-old **Guntown** through opening eighth-mile fractions of :13.40, :25.40 and :37. The duo stayed together for most of the breeze and completed six furlongs in a comfortable 1:14.60 and were up seven furlongs in 1:29.40.

"He's a wonderful individual," Asmussen said following Epicenter's 2 1/2-length win in the \$1 million TwinSpires.com Louisiana Derby. "He's another product of Winchell and **Dr. (Dave) Lambert's** selection process. He had his early schooling at mom and dad's (**Asmussen Horse Center**) in Laredo, Texas. He came in highly recommended and has always been impressive physically. He's done well in his development and continues to improve as the races get longer."

Bettors tabbed Epicenter as the 9-2 favorite in Pool 5 of the Kentucky Derby Future Wager, which closed Saturday prior to the runnings of the \$1 million Blue Grass (GI), \$750,000 Santa Anita Derby (GI) and \$750,000 Wood Memorial (GII). He will enter the Kentucky Derby with four wins from six starts and boasts purse earnings of \$1,010,639.

Echo Zulu, with Fabian in the saddle, worked inside of debut maiden special weight winner **Belle Rebelle** through opening fractions of :13, :24.40 and :36. The duo galloped out six furlongs in 1:14.40.

Unbeaten Echo Zulu was the Champion 2-year-old Filly in 2021 following her emphatic 5 1/4-length score in the \$2 million Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies (GI). Her 3-year-old debut was in the \$400,000 TwinSpires.com Fair Grounds Oaks where she dug in during the late stages of the 1 1/16-mile race to hold off **Hidden Connection** by a scant nose.

"She got a little tired in the stretch but she got the job done," jockey **Joel Rosario** said. "She showed how much of an amazing horse she is. She dug in and didn't want to get beat."

"She was such a brilliant filly last year," Asmussen said. "She really has a straight-forward attitude. She got a break and to compete in the Fair Grounds Oaks as a prep, and to do what she did, when in the past multiple great fillies have won this race, she can now add her name to that list. We're very proud of that."

Echo Zulu is a perfect 5-for-5 and is one of several fillies that could vie for favoritism in the Kentucky Oaks.

Next weekend, several Kentucky Derby and Oaks contenders that are stabled on the grounds are tentatively scheduled to record timed workouts, including **Cyberknife**, **Secret Oath** and **Zozos**.

Training hours at Churchill Downs remain 5:30-10 a.m. with half-hour renovation breaks from 7-7:30 a.m. and 8:30-9 a.m. There is a 10-minute period for workers only from 7:30-7:40 a.m.

The 15-minute training window reserved for only Kentucky Derby and Oaks contenders will begin Saturday, April 23.

ABOUT CHURCHILL DOWNS RACETRACK

Churchill Downs Racetrack ("CDRT"), the world's most legendary racetrack, has been the home of The Kentucky Derby, the longest continually held annual sporting event in the United States, since 1875. Located in Louisville, CDRT features a series of themed race days during Derby Week, including the Kentucky Oaks, and conducts Thoroughbred horse racing during three race meets in the Spring, September, and the Fall. CDRT is located on 175 acres and has a one-mile dirt track, a 7/8-mile turf track, a stabling area, and provides seating for approximately 60,000 guests. The saddling paddock and the stable area has barns sufficient to accommodate 1,400 horses and a 114-room dormitory for backstretch personnel. CDRT also has a year-round simulcast wagering facility. www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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